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Carol Dandridge Charles '84 is committed to promoting the works of African American and Latino artists at the Community Folk Art Gallery.

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—Carol Dandridge Charles

Sharing a Passion for the Arts

Carol Dandridge Charles '84 draws upon years of experience as a dancer, actor, arts administrator, and mother to promote the work of emerging African American and Latino artists at the Community Folk Art Gallery. As interim director, she counsels young artists, hosts gallery openings, conducts children's workshops, develops educational programs, prepares grant proposals, and hangs exhibitions until all hours of the night. "I love my job because I love the arts," Charles says. "I believe I was put here on this earth to do God's work through artistic expression."

After earning a bachelor's degree in drama from the College of Visual and Performing Arts, Charles headed back home to New York City to attend New York University's graduate program in arts administration. She interned as a development assistant with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, and, with master's degree in hand, became the development and marketing assistant for the Dance Theatre of Harlem. "My passion is dance," Charles says. "A highlight of my life as a performer was dancing in a Syracuse Stage production of *Death and the King's Horsemen*."

In 1988, wedding bells brought Charles back to Central New York, where she built on her fund-raising and communications experience by working as a regional development officer for Syracuse University. She entered the political arena in 1990 as assistant director of communications for then-Syracuse Mayor Tom Young, but returned to SU in 1995 as a development officer for the College of Nursing. Charles got her arts administration career back on track in 1999, accepting the interim director's post at the Community Folk Art Gallery following the death of Herb Williams, the gallery's founder and director for 27 years. "This was a difficult time, and I was honored to be asked to succeed Herb," Charles says. "He dedicated his life to promoting the history and culture of underrepresented populations, and I look forward to carrying on his legacy with energy and enthusiasm."

The Community Folk Art Gallery is a unique force in the Syracuse community. Established in cooperation with SU's Department of African American Studies in 1972, the gallery features the work of local African American and Latino artists, and provides a community center where people can enjoy the world of art. The gallery's mission includes seeking out and counseling talented young artists and assisting them whenever possible in gaining admission to art schools and universities.

Charles believes arts education is an equally important part of her role. At SU she teaches the course *Art of the Black World*, and last fall brought in *Beyond Category*, a traveling exhibition from the Smithsonian Institution celebrating the life of Duke Ellington. Charles also encourages SU students majoring in art or museum studies to intern or volunteer at the gallery. "I would like students from other academic disciplines such as management or architecture

to intern at the gallery as well," she says. "It's an outstanding learning experience for the students, and we always put their knowledge and expertise to good use."

From day to day, Charles tries to strike a balance between creativity, administration, and the demands of raising two young daughters. To help keep her creativity flowing, she continues to dance and perform, and attends arts education seminars whenever possible. Last summer, Charles attended the National Black Arts Festival in Atlanta, which included an exhibition of American art from historically black colleges and universities, and performances by the Dayton Contemporary Dance Company. "The festival refreshed my spirit and soul," Charles says. "It was a wonderful way to recharge my creative energy."

Although affiliated with SU's Department of African American Studies, the Community Folk Art Gallery functions as a nonprofit organization. Charles acts as the liaison between the University and the gallery's board of directors. "The gallery is extremely fortunate to be guided by someone of Carol's talent, energy, and commitment," says board member Barry L. Wells, vice president for student affairs and dean of student relations at SU. "She has considerable administrative skills and a progressive outlook on arts education and museum management."

Charles credits her experience as a communications specialist and development officer with helping her know how to bring people together to accomplish goals. "I love starting with an idea and making things happen," she says. "Open dialogue and a good sense of humor are key."

—CHRISTINE YACKEL

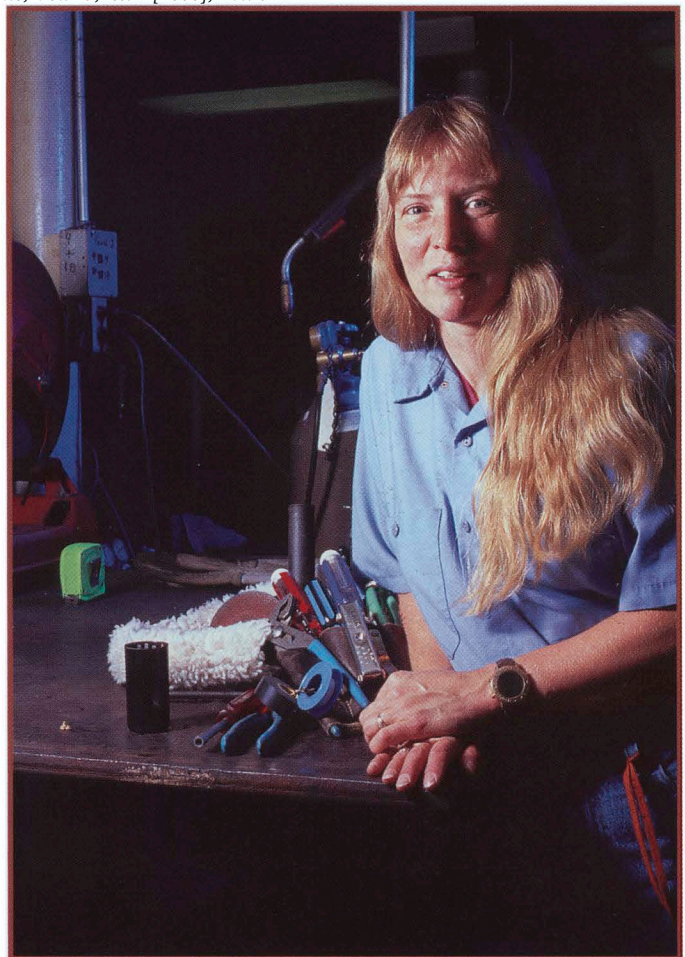
Always Ready for Repair Work

Sonja Lockwood was determined to be a maintenance worker at Syracuse University. She took BOCES courses, volunteered for special work programs at the University for several years, and hoped that, one day, she'd move from housekeeping to general maintenance. Finally, a job became available in September 1999, and Lockwood was hired as the first woman general maintenance worker at SU. "It was a long road," she says. "I just kept going to school and waiting for the right opportunity to come along."

Lockwood grew up with five brothers in a family where repairing things was a valued skill. Her father owned a garage, where she sometimes worked, and her mother liked mending things. "I must have inherited my interest in fixing things from my parents," she says.

Lockwood worked in housekeeping at SU for a decade before asking how she could get a maintenance job. The answer: "Go to school." So she took courses and studied such skills as electrical work, blueprint reading, air conditioning, and refrigeration. "Sometimes Sonja would take two classes a semester," says JD. Tessier, director of SU's Housing and Food Services Maintenance Zone. "That was on top of working full-time and being the single parent of two boys."

Lockwood also volunteered for EWOC (Employees Working Out of Classification), a maintenance department summer program that gives employees a chance to gain experience in other areas. For three summers, Lockwood assisted the maintenance crews around campus. As part of her EWOC assignment, she participated in the department's roving fix-it desk program, which consisted of going to different campus buildings to solicit repair jobs. She also was called on to fill in when a maintenance worker went out on disability or a leave of absence. "When an opening arose in the maintenance department, Sonja seemed like the natural choice," says maintenance manager Rusty Tassini, Lockwood's supervisor. "Her resumé is one of the



Sonja Lockwood is a skilled maintenance worker who enjoys the challenges posed by her job.

strongest I've seen for that position in my 25 years at the University. She's a bright, diligent worker who really shines."

Lockwood says it was hard at first for some of her co-workers to accept her, but most of the men in her department have been supportive. Her familiarity with the housekeeping staff has helped her too. "If housekeeping staff spot a burned-out light bulb or see something broken, they let me know immediately," she says. "That way I can fix problems before they become safety hazards."

Last year Lockwood worked mostly in Flint and Day residence halls, doing repairs in students' rooms. Such assignments threw her into the "deep end of the pool," but she enjoyed having her skills challenged. "That's the only way I'll continue to learn," Lockwood says. "I've done everything from repairing closet doors to removing bats from a residence-hall lobby."

For the next two years Lockwood will work at the Brewster-Boland complex, which houses about 700 students. "Each building has its own personality," she says, "and I'm just getting to know Brewster-Boland. It's a beautiful complex."

Lockwood knows that if she can't repair something, or answer an inquiry, there's always someone in the department who can. "We each have our own strengths and help each other out whenever possible," she says. "It's a team effort."

And when it comes to general building maintenance and repairs, students are always her top priority. "I get a lot of pleasure out of helping students because they're so grateful when I fix something," she says. "It's like giving them a million dollars, and that makes me feel good."

—CYNTHIA MORITZ AND CHRISTINE YACKEL